THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (DR. ABRAR AHMED): (a) and (b) At the Aid India Consortium Meeting held in Paris on 1-2 July, 1993, the Members of the Consortium had indicated an aid commitment is U.S. $7.4 billion for 1993-94, of which fast disbursing component of U.S. $1.96 billion.

(c) A large chunk of aid received in the past remained unutilised as most of the aid is tied to specific projects and the disbursements are therefore linked to the project implementation schedule. The pace of actual implementation varies from project to project. However, the loan amount not utilised during a particular financial year does not normally lapse and would be carried forward for utilisation in the subsequent years.

(d) Fresh foreign borrowings are resorted to for meeting the foreign exchange requirement of various projects and non-project, needs of the economy.

Prices of cosmetics and toiletries

120. SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA:

SHRI N. E. BALRAM:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that in the case of cosmetics and toiletries which had been given more than 50 per cent in the excise duty, the prices have gone up and the benefits have not been passed on to consumers;

(b) whether Government are aware that the price of tea has also gone up considerably;

(c) if so, whether any steps have been taken in the matter; and

(d) if so, what are the details thereof and with what result?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M. V. CHANDRASHEKHAR MURTHY): (a) and (b) Wholesale price of well known brands of Cosmetics and toiletries at the factory gate had shown reduction after the 1993-94 budget. However wholesale price of tea had gone up in the case of some brands prior to the 1993 Budget, duty incidence on tea was approximately one per cent to two per cent of the wholesale price at the factory gate.

(c) and (d) There is no legal mechanism, except in cases where there is price control to see that reduction in excise duty is passed on to the consumers. However, persuasive action by way of dialogue with the concerned segment of industry is initiated, wherever there is upward trend in wholesale price, in spite of reduction in excise duty, as excise duty is one of the factors in the determination of wholesale price of goods, in a competitive market.

Computerisation in Banks

121. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that as many as 400 branches of various public sector banks are likely to be fully computerised in next-two or three years as part of the banking sector reforms to improve efficiency and customer services reported in the Economic Times, New Delhi dated the 15.7.1993;

(b) if so, when the process of computerisation of ledgers in the banks had actually started and what is the number of branches which have been fully computerised so far; and

(c) whether Government have ensured/worked out that there would be retrenchment of bank workers due to computerisation of accounts?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (DR. ABRAR AHMED): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The process of computerisation of ledgers at branch level in public sector banks was started in the year 1984-85 with the installation of Advanced Ledger Posting Machines (ALPMS). So far 28 branches of public sector banks at different locations have been computerised.

(c) As per the 1983 agreement between the Indian Banks Association and Bank Employees Association, there shall be no retrenchment of staff as a result of introduction of machines/computers.

Relaxation in Import of Silver

122. SYED SIBTEY RAZI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have eased the import restrictions on silver;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof with background for such a move;

(c) whether these relaxations permit some categories of people to bring silver into India;

(d) if so, the names of categories of these persons with details of silver to be allowed for each individual and customs duty to be paid on the same;

(e) whether these relaxation have eased the local markets of silver of the country; and

(f) if so, what are the details thereof and its effect on smuggling of silver?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M .V CHANDRASHEKAR MURTHY): (a) to (d) In the background of the success of Gold Import Scheme, the Government decided to allow passengers of Indian origin or passengers holding a valid passport issued under the Passport Act, 1967, to import silver as baggage provided that such passengers are coming to India after a period of not less than six months of stay abroad and the duty at the rate of Rs. 500/- per Kg. is paid in convertible foreign currency. The maximum quantity of silver which can be imported is restricted to 100 Kgs. per passenger.

(e) and (f) The price of silver before announcement of these relaxations was Rs. 6800/- per Kg. which declined to Rs. 5490/- per Kg. by 28.02.1993. Though it started rising thereafter, maximum average monthly price being Rs. 6216/- per Kg. in May, 1993, it again declined to Rs. 6048/- per Kg. in June, 1993. From February, 1993 to June, 1993 a quantity of 1558 tonnes of silver has been imported under the Scheme. The legal imports of silver coupled with a decline in the profitability of smuggling this metal are likely to lead to reduction in smuggling of silver.

Transfer Policy in the State Bank of India

123. SHRI GHUFRAN AZAM: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware of the harassment being meted out to ex-servicemen serving as security officers (Assistant Manager—Security) in State Bank of India, Chandigarh Region (Punjab Module) due to its transfer policy;

(b) if so, the number of security officers AM (Security) transferred from one centre to another within one year of their posting;

(c) whether MOS (Banking and Insurance) have received any representation from some members of Parliament requesing revocation of such arbitrary transfer orders;

(d) if so, what action has been taken thereon; and

(e) what action has taken by Government to formulate a fool-proof policy in this regard?